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PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER  
7 October 1983

# Report hints at CIA link to air raid

From Inquirer Wire Services

WASHINGTON — A Virginia company managed by a man with ties to the CIA owned a small plane until shortly before it was used in a Nicaraguan rebel bombing raid on the Managua airport, according to a report published yesterday.

The twin-engine Cessna 404, converted for use as a bomber, was owned until June by Investair Leasing Corp. of McLean, Va., which is managed by Edgar Mitchell, a former employee of an aviation company once controlled by the CIA, the New York Times reported. The plane was shot down during the raid Sept. 8, killing the pilot, Agustin M. Roman, and the copilot, Sebastian Muller, a Miskito Indian.

The Times quoted a company official as saying the plane was sold June 27 to a Panamanian company.

The Associated Press, quoting intelligence sources, reported yesterday that the plane was supplied by the CIA to guerrillas under Eden Pastora, the renegade Sandinista hero whose forces are based in Costa Rica. The existence of U.S. aid to Pastora has not been established.

Before his death, the Times reported, Roman had spent nine months on secret air missions in support of two groups opposed to Nicaragua's Sandinista government, one of the groups with acknowledged CIA support.

The CIA declined to comment on the Times report.

Mitchell commented only to confirm that Investair briefly owned the twin-engine aircraft and that it was sold in June.

According to the Times, Mitchell was once a top official of Intermountain Aviation Inc., which according to 1976 Senate records provided air support for paramilitary activities as one of the largest of the CIA's proprietary companies. It was dissolved in 1975.

The Times said that another Investair official, Mark L. Peterson, refused to answer questions and that a Mark Peterson was listed in 1977 and

1978 as secretary and treasurer of Air America Inc., another CIA proprietary company.

Although CIA covert support for Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries based in Honduras has been known for months, the source of funding for Pastora's Democratic Revolutionary Alliance has remained secret.

The alliance, based along Nicaragua's southern border with Costa Rica, says it has 3,700 fighters, although U.S. estimates put its force at about 2,000 men. It remains independent of the larger, Honduran-based Nicaraguan Democratic Force, which Pastora has denounced because it includes former national guardsmen who served under the strongman the Sandinistas ousted, Anastasio Somoza.

Three U.S. intelligence sources who confirmed for the Associated Press that the United States was aiding Pastora spoke on condition they not be identified.

One said that only the plane that crashed at the airport came from the CIA, and that other planes used by Pastora's forces were provided by the rightist Salvadoran government without U.S. involvement.

Another source, who has access to a ledger listing CIA aid to Pastora, said the CIA supplied him three two-engine Cessnas and two single-engine Cessnas. He added that the agency also provided Pastora's rebels with "the normal complement of arms" that go to the Honduran-based forces.

That source said the CIA bought the planes with money from the agency's secret "contingency fund," not from the \$19 million allocated for the Nicaraguan covert action in 1983 budget. The CIA exceeded that budgeted amount in March — about halfway through the federal budget year — and relied on the contingency fund to pay for the operation after that, sources have said.

The source said the planes technically were sold to Pastora's forces because CIA officials "don't want their fingerprints too obvious."

That account was confirmed independently by a third source, who added: "Pastora's up to his neck in this."

After the airport attack, the Sandinistas released documents they claim to have recovered from the crashed 1981 twin-engine Cessna 404. The documents included one pilot's Florida driver's license, his U.S. Social Security card and American credit cards.

The papers showed that Roman, a one-time top Sandinista air force official, had made recent flights to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Venezuela, Miami, Houston and New York.

Sources say the CIA spent \$33 million to aid the 7,000 to 10,000 Nicaraguan *contras* — or counterrevolutionaries — in fiscal 1983, which ended Sept. 30. Estimates of the aid for the new fiscal year run as high as \$48 million.

Amid concern that the Reagan administration was trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, a claim that President Reagan has denied, the House voted July 28 to cut off U.S. aid to the *contras*.

The Senate never acted on the bill.